A Plan of Action for Education

Department of Education
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Department of Education
P.O. Box 2000
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
C1A 7N8

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the education community, and the people of Prince Edward Island, with a substantive statement of the Government's commitment to maintain and improve the Prince Edward Island education system in a planned and systematic fashion.

This paper contains the elements and priorities which will form the basis for the initiation of a plan for the development of the education system. As well, a fundamental element of the paper is a commitment to a planning process. The planning process is intended to be flexible and responsive, to allow the plan to be reviewed annually and brought up-to-date as new challenges, expectations, and needs are identified.

Education as a Priority

Education is a priority for Government, as it is for our society. Statements such as 'education is the future' and 'young people are our most valuable resource' have achieved the status of cliches. Their truth is undeniable, but, in order to have substance, as well as truth, they must be backed up with resources and with commitment by all partners in the education community.

The Government is committed to providing continuing leadership in the provision of resources to our education system and to encouraging commitment and professionalism by educators and all partners in the education community.

Planning for the Future

The process of educating our young people demands a unique partnership among educators, parents, and all members of the community. This partnership must result in effective communication, basic agreement on fundamental principles, co-operative decision making, and a clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities. For these reasons, the planning process and resulting plan are foremost an instrument of communication.

The plan developed by the Department of Education and outlined in this paper is the result of extensive and lengthy consultations with educators and the community and studies of various aspects of the educational system. The studies completed to date include the reports of the following committees and commissions:

- The Ministerial Advisory Committee on Curriculum,
- The School System Review Commission,
- The Advisory Committee on the School System Review Commission,
- The Advisory Committee on Learning Disabilities,
- The Advisory Panel on Mental Retardation Services,
- The Core French Review Commission,
- The Ministerial Advisory Committee on Family Life Education.

A number of the recommendations made by these various committees and commissions have been implemented or are at some stage in the implementation process. However, a planned and systematic approach to dealing with the recommendations arising from these reports has never been presented to Government or the public. Therefore, in the fall of 1986 the Minister of Education directed that a planning process be undertaken by the Department of Education which would provide the basis for implementing necessary changes and improvements to the educational system.

Over the past year the various reports and submissions made to the Department have been subjected to intense scrutiny. Consultations have been undertaken with all the partners in the educational system in order to prepare this comprehensive document outlining the direction the Department will be taking over the next several years. The result is not a reaction to any one specific commission or committee report but a set of objectives for the Department of Education for the medium-term future.

The success of the plan and the planning process will hinge primarily upon the extent to which it is understood and supported by all members of the educational community.

History

Legislative authority for the elementary/secondary system and the vocational high school system is provided by the *School Act*, and for the post-secondary system by the *University Act* and the *Holland College Act*. The following is a review of some important facts regarding the elementary/secondary and post-secondary system.

Elementary and Secondary Education

In 1970-71 the elementary/secondary system underwent a major restructuring and the *School Act* was completely revised. The new Act empowered the Minister to establish regional administrative units to replace the numerous local school boards. Local taxation in support of education was taken from the local level and combined with property taxation under the *Real Property Tax Act*. This action resulted in elementary and secondary education being funded completely from general revenues of the Province.

In 1972 five regional administrative units were created, one of which was a French-language unit. Each unit has 15 elected school trustees who are responsible for the operation of the unit in accordance with the *School Act* and Regulations. The relative sizes of the units are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 — Unit Statistics

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Total
No. of Students	3,395	4,852	10,747	5,028	465	24,487
Instructional Staff*	211	279	629	293	35	1,447
Non-Instructional*	117	124	216	147	18	662
No. of Schools	9	12	25	19	1	66
Annual Budget in Millions (1986-87)	$13.5	$16.8	$35.0	$18.0	$2.2	$85.6

*full-time equivalent

At about the same time as the *School Act* was revised, the provincial government entered into a cost shared Development Plan for Prince Edward Island. One of the areas which received federal funding assistance was school construction. Many new schools were constructed to replace individual schools or groups of small schools which existed at the time. Federal assistance for school construction ceased in the early eighties.

Foundation Program

In addition to the establishment of regional administrative units, the *School Act* empowers the Minister to establish foundation programs, to approve operating and capital budgets for the regional administrative units, to prescribe standards of instruction, to develop new programs, and to authorize textbooks.

The first Foundation Program under the new *School Act* was established in 1972-73 and was primarily a document which attempted to distribute funding to the five regional administrative units on an equitable basis. Since 1972 changes to the Foundation Program have been relatively few and have consisted primarily of adjustments to allow for inflationary increases in costs.

The existing Foundation Program sets out the formulae and other means of establishing budgets for the regional administrative units. Instructional staffing is provided primarily by formula or pupil-teacher ratio (PTR). The academic PTR is 19.3:1 (students to teachers) and the vocational PTR is 14:1. The number of school board office supervisory staff is authorized by the Minister. This includes superintendents, assistant superintendents, and program consultants.

The non-instructional staff are divided into four groups: transportation, property maintenance, administrative support, and board office supervisory. The transportation group includes bus drivers and mechanics. The property maintenance group includes custodians, cleaners, maintenance tradesmen, and power engineers. The administrative support group consists of school secretaries and board office clerical and administrative staff. The board office non-instructional supervisory staff include business superintendents, and property and transportation supervisors. Except for custodians and cleaners, the number of staff is as authorized by the Minister based on the needs of the individual units. Custodians and cleaners are allocated on the basis of 1 to 20,000 square feet of floor area in schools.

Operating funds are provided to the regional administrative units in the following categories:

- Administration,
- Maintenance - Physical Plant,
- Program,
- Transportation,
- Capital,
- Debt Retirement,
- Supplementary Funding.

Of these categories, program funding is provided on the basis of $40.00 per student, capital is provided on the basis of $29.40 per student enrolled in facilities five years and older and $8.80 per student enrolled in facilities less than five years old. The other categories are funded on the basis of need and historical spending patterns.

As can be noted in Table 2, the total budget for 1987-88 for grants to regional school units is $84.7 million of which 66 percent is for instructional salaries.

Table 2 — Grants to Units

	in millions
Instructional Salaries	$56.3
Non-instructional Salaries	11.2
Maintenance Physical Plant	5.0
Transportation	3.4
Program	1.2
Capital	.6
Debt Retirement	6.3
Administration	.7
TOTAL	$84.7

Department Staff

In order to fulfill the obligations to prescribe standards of instruction, develop new programs, and authorize and supply textbooks, the Minister has a department staff of 45 divided into four divisions: Administration and Finance, Program Development and Implementation, French Educational Services, and Educational Services.

The Administration and Finance Division provides support services in a wide range of areas. Administration is responsible for teacher certification and pensions, personnel, information systems and all computer applications within the Department. Finance provides budgetary preparation and control for all educational expenditures and operates the central book supply for the province.

The Program Development and Implementation Division is responsible for developing and maintaining the entire course of studies for grades 1 to 12. This includes curriculum development, in-service training of teachers for new programs, authorizing textbooks and other learning materials, and general consulting services in relation to the curriculum.

The French Educational Services Division carries out tasks similar to that of the Program Development and Implementation Division for students in French first and second language programs. It also administers the various grant programs which provide for French services in schools and for training teachers to work in French.

The Educational Services Division is responsible for the provision of support services in special education, guidance and counselling, testing and evaluation, and media. In addition, the Division determines special education staffing needs in conjunction with the units, administers programs at the provincial School for the Hearing Impaired, coordinates services provided by the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority, and administers the high school equivalency testing program.

The total budget for these activities, including the supply of all textbooks, is $5.8 million allocated as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 — Department Budget

Administration	$ 736,300
Finance	213,300
Program Development	618,100
Educational Services	1,592,600*
Minority and Second Language	1,568,800
Central Book Supply	1,070,900
TOTAL	$5,800,000

* Includes $942,000 in grants to Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority to cost share the provision of services for the visually handicapped and hearing impaired.

In addition to the above responsibilities, the Minister is also responsible for the Provincial Public Library and Archives system with an annual budget of $1.6 million. This includes 34 full-time and 27 part-time staff members who operate the 26 libraries, the Media Centre, and the Public Archives. Centralized acquisition and processing services are provided to school libraries along with consulting services and a film and videotape loan service.

Vocational High School

The vocational high school system has undergone structural changes in the last 15 years. Until the mid-seventies vocational and adult education was a division of the Department of Education. At that time, a decision was taken that the vocational high school program could most efficiently be offered by Holland College, particularly because it already had many of the facilities required. Thus, delivery of vocational high school programming and the adult education program was transferred to Holland College in 1974 where most of it has remained to the present time.

The budget for vocational high school programs provided through Holland College for 1987-88 is approximately $3.9 million, $2.8 million of which is for salaries, $900,000 for operating costs, and $204,000 for capital.

Post-Secondary Education

The post-secondary system also underwent significant changes in the late sixties and early seventies. In 1969 the *University Act* consolidated St. Dunstan's University and Prince of Wales College to form the University of Prince Edward Island. At approximately the same time, the *Holland College Act* created a new college of applied arts and technology named Holland College. These two post-secondary institutions are funded by the Province through the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. The Commission's role is to recommend levels of funding to the Maritime governments for all post-secondary institutions in the region, as well as to maintain liaison with the provinces on changes to program offerings at the various institutions.

The Prince Edward Island School of Nursing offers a three-year Registered Nursing program and a one-year Licenced Nursing Assistant program. It is funded by the Department of Health and Social Services through the Hospital and Health Services Commission.

Very recently the University of Prince Edward Island has been expanded to include the new Atlantic Veterinary College which is funded on a cost-shared basis among the four Atlantic Provinces depending on the number of student places allocated to each province.

The total budget for post-secondary education is $27.9 million allocated as shown in Table 4

Table 4 — Post-Secondary Budget

	in millions
University of P.E.I. (excluding A.V.C.)	$12.3
Holland College	5.2
Interprovincial Transfers	4.8
Atlantic Veterinary College	3.4
Student Bursaries	2.2
TOTAL	$27.9

Summary

Given the considerable amount of change that the education system has undergone since 1970, the Foundation Program and the organization of the system have worked reasonably well. Recently, changes in both the educational needs of our youth and in society generally have compelled us to reassess our programs, services, and funding structures. The following sections describe some of the emerging issues and outline the Department's response to them.

Schools and Society

The educational system in North America has been under intense scrutiny for a number of years. This arises from a number of factors:

- Concerns that schools are not doing an adequate job of preparing students for jobs or post-secondary education;
- Concerns that both standards and discipline in schools have declined in the past two decades;
- A desire to put more responsibility on the schools to deal with various social concerns (alcohol and drugs, family life education, family violence, values education, etc.);
- Increased emphasis on including new areas in the curriculum (French immersion, conservation, science, technology, regional studies, etc.);
- Increased emphasis on ensuring that the "basics" of language arts and mathematics are adequately taught;
- The integration of handicapped children into the regular school and classroom.

While it is simplistic to attempt to reduce the public's concerns and expectations regarding education to a short list, it is helpful to identify some of the more significant issues which have and will continue to have a specific impact on our schools.

Accountability

During the past decade significant public interest has focused on how good a job the schools are doing in teaching the so-called "basic" skills of language arts and mathematics. In addition, concern has been expressed regarding the need to include other subjects such as science and computer studies in the list of the basics. This scrutiny of the education system has been carried out by an increasingly educated and literate public and by media which can now expose concerns rapidly and vividly to a large number of people. All this comes at a time when both social and economic conditions reinforce the public's view of the importance of education in preparing our children to take their rightful place in society.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that the accountability of the education system is now held to be of particular importance. Numerous studies and commissions of both local and national scope have specifically focused on the performance of the school system and suggested sometimes massive agendas for change. These have focused on the content and scope of the curriculum in schools, the qualifications of teachers, and the method for measuring the results of the educational process.

This heightened level of interest in education is valuable in that it serves to raise the level of awareness and knowledge on the part of the public regarding what is happening in schools. The process of education is a shared responsibility between parents and the other partners in the formal education structure. While the Minister of Education has the responsibility for the school system itself, for the prescription of the standards of instruction, and for leadership of the system, the ultimate responsibility for education rests with parents. The renewed interest in the accountability of the system can serve to better inform both the public and the Minister and thus make the system more responsive to demands for change while maintaining a proper balance.

Changes in the Workplace

The emergence of the "information society" has had a profound impact both on the workplace and on the role that the public now expects the schools to play. Changes in the workplace are creating new jobs requiring new skills but they are also leading to structural unemployment, job loss, and the need for retraining the workforce on a regular basis. This has had, and likely will continue to have, a particular impact on specific segments in the workforce such as women, workers in primary industries such as farming and fishing, and the poor.

The school system is being asked to cope with these changes by improving its teaching about science and technology, by adopting the use of technology in teaching, and by changing vocational and post-secondary education to meet the emerging needs of business and industry. At the same time, there are an increasing number of well-educated and articulate parents who have very specific goals for their children and are particularly insistent that education provide the best possible programs and services for their children.

Minority and Second Language Programs

In the context of a bilingual Canada, there can be little argument with the necessity for providing first and second language French programs in our schools. The French community on Prince Edward Island is concerned that it continue to have access to a high quality French school program. It is also important that English-speaking children have both a fundamental knowledge of the French language and develop an appreciation of French culture.

However, both the small size of the French community on Prince Edward Island and the growing demand for second language programs such as French immersion present a challenge in developing French programs. To ensure the success of these programs, well-trained teachers, comprehensive programs, and quality materials are necessary.

Normalization of the Handicapped

One of the more critical issues facing education today is the provision of comprehensive special education programs. This arises from a combination of factors but several are particularly significant. First, parents have come to expect that schools will provide programs for all children, no matter what their

special abilities or handicaps. This expectation is backed by the emphasis in both provincial human rights acts and in the Charter of Rights on the protection of the rights of handicapped individuals. Second, general expectations have risen regarding the potential of all individuals, notwithstanding their handicaps or disabilities. Finally, handicapped children who were formerly institutionalized or who dropped out of school at an early age are now living in the community and using the regular educational system until their 21st birthday.

These trends place particular pressure on the school system and educators. Although it has been shown that handicapped students can be successfully integrated into schools and that education can provide good programs for children with a variety of handicaps, these programs require substantially more resources than other programs.

The past several years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of mentally and physically handicapped students in the school system and an increase in the severity of their handicaps. Our system currently serves almost 500 such children. At the same time, improved methods of diagnosis and assessment have allowed us to identify children with specific learning disabilities more readily. Recent surveys have identified almost 1,000 children in our schools as being learning disabled while another 500 have some learning difficulties.

Social Conditions

For a variety of reasons, our schools and teachers are expected to play a leadership role in helping our children adjust to new social conditions which the traditional school environment was not designed to address. The problems faced by some children today are well known:

- Family disruption - divorce, single parent families, transient families, unemployment, etc.;
- Sexual behavior - teenage sexual activity, teenage pregnancy;
- Child neglect and abuse;
- Alcohol and drug use by children;
- Family violence and drug abuse by parents.

Family disruption and the diminished influence of traditional institutions where values education is carried out, such as the church, have meant that increasingly the school system has been looked to for the provision of values education and support for families to deal with the consequences of these influences on our children. It has also increased the pressure on the system to begin education programs earlier and to provide pre-school services either for all children or for those judged "at risk."

Financial Conditions

The last decade has been one of difficult economic conditions. For a number of years in that period inflation climbed into double digits, driven by high oil prices and significant salary settlements as unionized employees struggled to keep pace with the cost of living. Governments, in attempting to control

inflation, implemented restraint programs which not only limited spending but forced reductions in many sectors including education.

At the same time that restraint measures were being imposed, the demands on the education system were increasing. These increased demands came from the requirement to provide specialized services for an increasing number of handicapped students who were remaining in the system and from the fact that both school buildings and bus fleets were aging, which meant increased maintenance costs.

A decline in enrollment at the elementary and secondary level has meant a proportionate decrease in the number of regular classroom teachers provided under the pupil-teacher ratio. However, increasing demands for staff in special education have at least partially offset the decline resulting from lower enrollment.

While the enrollment at the elementary and secondary level has declined over the last several years, enrollment at the post-secondary level has increased significantly. This has resulted primarily from two factors. Improvements in the elementary and secondary system have reduced the number of drop-outs thereby increasing the number of students eligible to move on to some form of post-secondary education. A relatively weak economy and the demand for specialized skills in the job market over the last several years have resulted in many students continuing their education to increase their chances of obtaining employment.

The overall result on the education system is that demands on the elementary/secondary system have not decreased because of declining enrollment, but rather have increased because of special needs students. At the same time, demands on the post-secondary system have increased because of increased enrollments.

Agenda for Action

The following is a summary of the Department's plans to address the concerns and issues raised in the preceding section. It will provide the basis for implementing necessary improvements to our educational system.

Philosophy and Goals of Education

The Ministerial Advisory Committee on Curriculum, the School System Review Commission and the Advisory Committee on the School System Review Commission have each recommended that the Department of Education re-examine its philosophy and goals. Given the length of time that has passed since the development of the Department's philosophy of education and the rapid changes that our society has undergone in the past decade, it is important to review that philosophy with the aim of ensuring that it is relevant to the needs of our students.

It is appropriate to conduct this review of philosophy at the same time as examinations of a number of specific areas of the educational system are under way and while necessary policies are being developed in critical areas. The renewal of our philosophy of education should and will be an integral part of the planning process that is now being undertaken and will reflect not only abstract ideals but the realities of providing educational programs and services to children and youth with a variety of needs and aspirations. This process will be undertaken in consultation with the partners in the educational system.

Educational Program and Services

In setting priorities for planning and action, three areas of particular need have been identified: special education, guidance and counselling, and libraries. Provision of resources and specific Department policies in these areas will ensure that a quality education program can be offered to all students.

In addition to these specialized services, the Department has identified other areas that require immediate attention. These focus on the need to redirect or improve services regarding science and technology programs, vocational education, and French language education.

Finally, Government recognizes the need to ensure standards across the province and to increase accountability for the programs and services provided in schools. This requires strengthened evaluation programs and additional efforts in curriculum development.

The Department of Education has begun the process of developing the necessary policies and guidelines for these services as outlined below.

School Curriculum: Recently concerns have been raised about differences from school to school regarding the amount of time devoted to specific subjects and the exact nature of the school curriculum. In order to ensure consistency, the Department will develop a set of guidelines for each level of school to ensure a well defined and high quality educational program is offered across the province. This will address subjects at all levels, including optional junior and senior high school programs and the need to revise and add courses at the senior high school level.

The Minister has accepted a number of the recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Curriculum and has instituted significant changes to senior high school graduation requirements. Students must now successfully complete 18 course credits, with at least five of those being at the grade 12 level, to graduate. This must include four language arts, two mathematics, two social studies, and two science courses.

In consultation with appropriate groups in the community, the Department will also undertake the development of a human rights policy with particular emphasis on the acquisition and use of curriculum materials which reflect the cultural diversity and fundamental rights of our population.

French Language Education: Government recognizes the difficulties Unit 5 encounters in providing French first language services since it operates one school with a limited student population. This provides for very little flexibility in staffing. In order to allow Unit 5 to maintain essential services, Government will provide a guarantee of funding for at least five teachers above the ratio and will undertake to maintain sufficient funding to the Unit 5 Resource Centre so that it can provide services to French first and second language teachers throughout the province.

Increased activity in all areas relating to French as a minority language including program development and implementation activities, administration of bilateral agreements, and cooperative projects with other jurisdictions requires increased resources and commitment. In addition, there is a significant need to increase curriculum development for an expanding French immersion program, as well as for updating of programs already in place for French first language and French second language (Core French) students.

Some of the recommendations of the Core French Review Committee are already being implemented in schools. To coordinate this process, the Department will include a component on French second language education in the guidelines to be developed on elementary and junior high school curriculum. The Department is beginning the process to increase curriculum staff to ensure adequate curriculum development activities can be undertaken for French first and second language programs.

Vocational Education: More than ever, we now recognize the importance of vocational programs to prepare students for changes in the workplace brought

about by the move to an information society and the increased reliance on technology in all aspects of business and industry. These changes in the workplace are forcing us to re-examine the goals of the vocational programs we offer in our schools and the best means to administer and deliver them.

The reports of both the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Curriculum and the School System Review Commission identified a significant level of dissatisfaction with the current vocational education delivery system and programs. However, while indicating the need for this analysis, the studies conducted to date have not included a detailed examination of vocational education in Prince Edward Island. Government has begun a major study of vocational education services in order to determine essential information regarding the content of these courses and the best means to deliver them.

Currently the delivery of pre-vocational programs in two units is contracted out to Holland College. Based on the recommendations of the School System Review Commission and the Advisory Committee on the School System Review Commission, the Department of Education has undertaken discussions with those units regarding their taking full responsibility for the delivery of pre-vocational programs. The Department agrees that both the content and intent of those programs are more closely related to other programs currently delivered by high schools than to "traditional" vocational programs offered through Holland College. Thus, the administration and delivery of pre-vocational programs might be greatly facilitated if they were undertaken directly by the units.

Services for Exceptional Students: The integration of mentally handicapped, physically disabled, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled students into the school system and the recognition of the fact that, under the *School Act*, they have a right to an educational program that allows them to develop to their potential requires a high level of staffing. At the same time, the units are under increasing pressure to provide more services in the regular classroom because of new curriculum demands, the needs of students experiencing learning difficulties, and the increasing expectations that parents have for the the educational system such as providing programs for the gifted.

Government recognizes the essential nature of special education services and the need to provide sufficient funding for schools to provide appropriate educational programs to all students with special needs. In large measure this process has already begun. Over the past four years the Government has made significant funding increases to provide additional teachers and teacher assistants to work with exceptional children. This has led to an increase of 42.5 teachers and 48.3 teacher assistants at a total additional cost in excess of two million dollars per year.

The Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services, has undertaken a new program to provide specialized services to children with severe emotional/behavioural problems. The Department has also recently developed a draft policy and guidelines on special education services.

Efforts are also being made to provide programs and resources for gifted students or those with exceptionally strong capabilities in specific areas. This

includes enriched academic courses in some subject areas, library materials and other instructional resources of interest to these students, and early admission to university. New instructional procedures which place the onus on students to explore and expand their level of understanding and achievement and special competitions in subject areas such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry are also being encouraged. These efforts will be supported by the Department through the improvement of school library resources, ongoing program development work, and encouragement of the involvement of outside agencies and individuals who can assist students.

Guidance Services: The past eight years have seen a dramatic reduction in the guidance services offered in the schools as staff formerly involved in providing those services have been moved into regular classroom teaching assignments because of increased needs there. In fact, our schools now have fewer counsellors than in 1978 with the most serious reduction occurring at the elementary school level. This makes it difficult to offer services that students increasingly need. These services relate to family problems (marital breakdown, child abuse, etc.), peer problems (drug abuse, vandalism, etc.), and the need for career counselling in an increasingly complex employment environment. Without these services it is difficult for schools to offer appropriate programs and counselling to all students. These staff shortages come at a particularly difficult time for schools as the educational system is increasingly being called upon to deal with students suffering the effects of rapid changes in society.

Government believes that guidance and counselling services should be available to all students at all levels of schooling. The Department of Education is developing a policy and guidelines outlining the services that should be provided and will attempt to ensure sufficient resources are provided.

School Library Services: Dramatic reductions have also occurred in library staff levels. Currently a number of schools are without the service of even a part-time librarian. Providing a good education for our students requires that adequate library services and personnel be available, particularly because of the increasingly complex nature of subjects studied and the need for students to become familiar with and use all of the information resources available to them. In fact, library materials and services are integral to all areas of learning. Thus, it is essential that libraries be provided funding to enhance their collections to meet specific curriculum needs.

Government believes that school library services are essential to a well-rounded educational program. The Department of Education is developing a policy and guidelines outlining library services that should be provided in schools and will attempt to ensure sufficient resources are provided.

Science and Technology: Government has undertaken a process to develop a provincial policy regarding science and technology. It is both appropriate and necessary that the Department of Education be involved in that process and that the educational system respond to the needs of its students that are influenced by changes in technology and long-range provincial goals and objectives in science and technology. In consultation with other government departments, the role the education system should be playing in a provincial

science and technology policy, the nature of specific programs, and the cost implications will be examined.

A significant aspect of technology, the use of computers in business and industry, is already being addressed in the school system. However, the rapid changes in this field and the need to ensure that students receive an appropriate education with regard to computer technology require the school system to continue to provide computer equipment that is compatible with the equipment students will be using in college or university and the work place.

Evaluation: In order to ensure accountability and to assist teachers in addressing the specific needs of all students, the Department will develop policy guidelines with respect to both the evaluation of students and schools. While these guidelines should have a school and unit focus, the Department must play a key role in coordinating their development. More specifically, the guidelines should provide for the assessment and diagnosis of students' strengths and weaknesses, identification of program effectiveness, on-going evaluation of schools, and comparison of student achievement to established norms. A provincial advisory committee will be formed to develop the guidelines and advise on any funding necessary for in-service training related to testing programs, materials, and scoring services.

Department Staff

A number of the studies on the education system have identified the need for additional staff within the Department of Education. This is necessary to ensure the Department's ability to manage the education system and to provide the proper support necessary to the school units to implement the changes outlined. Particularly important are provisions for the staff required to coordinate the review and replacement of curriculum on an on-going basis in order to ensure that it is timely and appropriate to the changing needs of both students and society.

Government recognizes this need and, along with providing the resources necessary for the actions listed in the preceding section, will also endeavor to ensure that the Department has adequate staff to fulfill its responsibilities.

Teacher Professional Development

Several particular areas of need relating to teacher professional development have been identified. Some of this results from the introduction of new subjects and technology into schools. At the same time, it must be realized that many teachers have been in the system for two decades or more since their initial training and some teachers are being transferred into subjects they have not previously taught. All of this creates the need for substantially increased staff development activities. The current imbalance between the large number of men and small number of women in leadership roles in our educational system also suggests the need for specific programs to encourage women to prepare for positions of responsibility and to afford them the opportunity to obtain such positions.

The last several years have seen a number of changes in the style and delivery of teacher professional development programs. The Department supports the trend toward school-based staff development activities. This provides the advantage of involving the entire staff of the school and ensures that programs are based on identified needs and involve the participants actively. The coordination of teacher professional development activities offered by the Department, units, and the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation has been and continues to be a concern. Better coordination of in-service activities can lead to less duplication of effort and resources and more effective programs.

The Department will ensure that this coordination takes place through the recently announced Staff Development Committee. It is also anticipated that significant changes, either in funding or in organization of the school calendar, will be required to accommodate the amount of staff development required.

Post-Secondary and Adult Education

Recent concerns about funding of post-secondary education, questions the relevance about of programs, and new provincial initiatives in areas such as science and technology suggest the need for the Department to be more directly involved with post-secondary education. In addition, the recent restructuring of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission will require development of policies and priorities for post-secondary education at the provincial level and place funding for post-secondary education in a considerably more competitive environment.

Officials at both the University of Prince Edward Island and Holland College have expressed a desire to maintain closer links with Department and school unit officials. Thus, the Department will work with provincial post-secondary institutions to establish an effective and mutually supportive liaison between them and the school system.

The subject of adult education, particularly in relation to literacy and to the need for retraining to accommodate changing needs in the workforce, has received much attention recently. At present, the Department of Education has no direct role in the provision of adult education. Given the Department's concern that appropriate provisions be made in the educational system for the needs of all Islanders and our interest in developing effective liaison with post-secondary institutions, the Department will be undertaking consultations with other relevant government departments to determine what role, if any, it should take with regard to adult education programs.

Public Libraries

Seven years of decreasing or no growth budgets for libraries and archives have placed a strain on the system both in terms of human resources and collections. This comes at the same time that difficult economic conditions, high unemployment, and the rapidly increasing costs of books have caused more and more people to look to the public library for their recreational and serious reading needs. Efforts are being undertaken to maintain and improve public library services and to initiate a records management system at the

Public Archives. The need for legislation and guidelines for provincial library services is also being explored

School Facilities and Transportation

During the last several years of restraint, school boards have used expenditure deferral methods in attempts to balance budgets. This has meant foregoing capital maintenance such that many school snow require major capital expenditures.

The school buildings in the system have an assessed replacement value of $200 million. The capital maintenance and equipment replacement budget is approximately $3 million a year. These amounts are not sufficient and efforts are being made to increase the allocation of resources in this area.

In 1987-88, funds totaling $1.5 million were provided for school bus replacement. Efforts are being made to maintain the level of funding necessary to ensure a safe, high quality school bus fleet.

The Department is undertaking a review of the Foundation Program to identify other areas of insufficient or inequitable funding. The Department will attempt to address such problems by revising the Foundation Program to more effectively provide for the needs of the school system.

Conclusion

The agenda for action outlined in the preceding is a major undertaking. But, changes to the educational system and a commitment by Government to provide leadership in maintaining and improving our education system are not, by themselves, sufficient to address all the significant issues now facing our society. While not diminishing the importance of education, it is vital to recognize that the education system cannot address every social concern and that placing unrealistic expectations on the system will only serve to frustrate our efforts to improve it.

All involved in the raising and educating of our children - parents, teachers, and others - must work together to provide the best opportunities for them. Education is a cooperative effort not restricted to the school day but requiring the collective efforts of both parents and teachers.

Implementing change in education is an ongoing process. Ensuring quality in our educational system will require continuing consultation with all the parties concerned and the cooperation of all those involved in the education of our children. The success of this plan and the planning process depends upon the dedication of the partners in the education system to the process of examining and improving our system.